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YOU



and your planning commission //



OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

City Planning Comm.

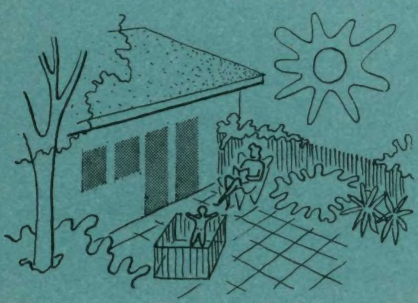
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What do you think of **OAKLAND**?

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Is it an ideal place to live, or could it stand a few improvements?



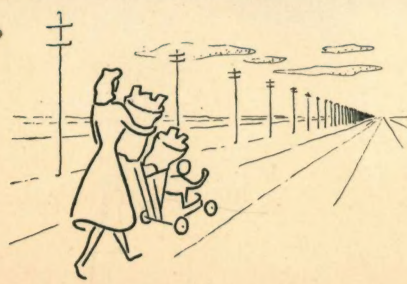
Is there plenty of yard space around your house—enough for lots of fresh air and sunshine, and room for California-style outdoor living?



Is there a school within easy walking distance that your children can get to without crossing dangerous, high-speed traffic streets?



Is there a playground or a park conveniently nearby?



How far do you have to go to take care of your day-to-day shopping needs?



How long does it take you to get to work? Are you exhausted when you get home in the evening because you've had to battle traffic congestion or stand up on a crowded bus most of the way?



Do you avoid going downtown because of traffic congestion and the shortage of parking spaces?

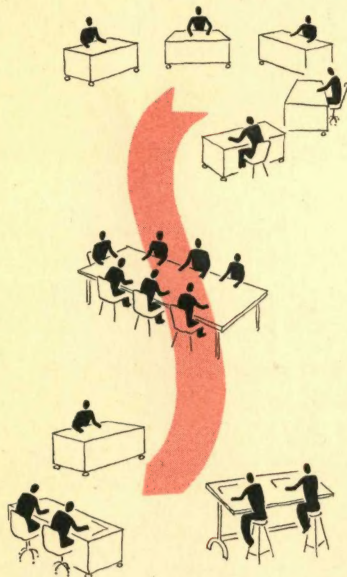
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If, in your book, these or similar problems exist today, just think how bad things could get in the future—with our population continually growing, with less and less open land available, with more and more automobiles clogging the streets.

Oakland is trying to solve these problems. Already the City has made considerable progress in building public projects and fostering sound private developments. Right now plans are being drawn to cure not only today's headaches but also those that certainly will develop in the future unless we use some preventive medicine.

Looking ahead is the job of your **CITY PLANNING COMMISSION.**

What is the CITY PLANNING COMMISSION ?



The Commission is made up of seven members, one appointed each year by the Mayor. The City Engineer is an ex-officio member. The Commissioners serve voluntarily; they meet on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at 4 o'clock in the City Hall.

The Commission is aided by a full-time paid staff of 10 city planners and clerical assistants. The planning office is located in the City Hall, and is open to serve you Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Commission is authorized to make recommendations to the City Council on all matters affecting the physical development of the City. These matters range all the way from how far you must set back your house from the street to where a new freeway should be located. Final decisions are up to the Councilmen or other elected representatives.

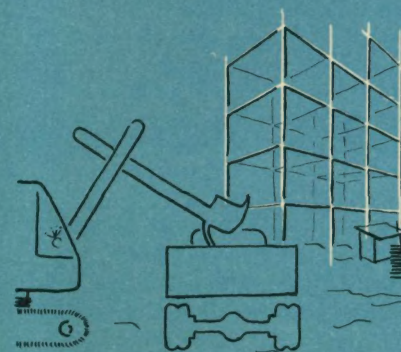
How does the commission plan for the FUTURE ?



The Commission's primary responsibility is the preparation of long-range plans to guide Oakland's future development. The plans are devised by staff technicians, subject to policy direction by the Commission. After formal approval by the Council, the plans become part of the City's official Master Plan.

The Master Plan has two purposes: (1) to prescribe solutions to the City's present problems, and (2) to guide its future growth along desirable lines. The Master Plan is not a voluminous document sitting on a shelf or a large map hanging on the wall to which the Commission refers whenever a question rises. Actually the Plan consists of a series of reports, maps and charts dealing with various aspects of city development.

As of 1952, the City has officially adopted plans of freeways and major streets, mass transit, and the civic center. Plans for off-street parking, airports and shoreline development have been completed but still

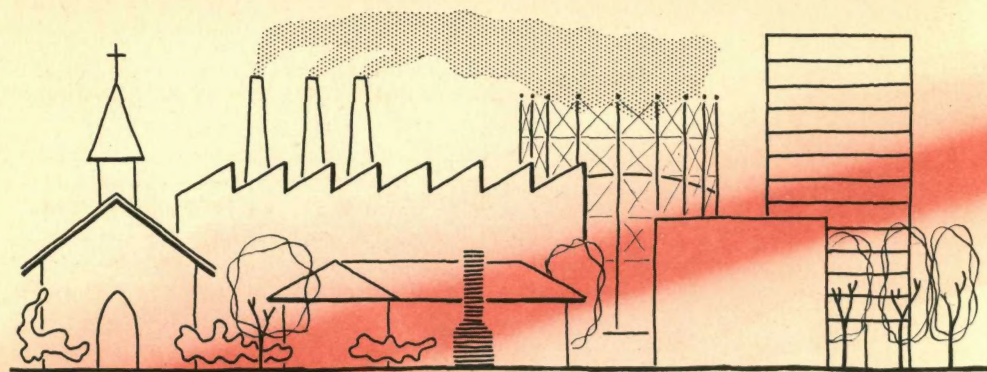


await adoption by the Council. Work on a general land use plan is now in progress. Scheduled for the future are plans for schools, parks, recreation areas, public buildings and community redevelopment.

Master plans are not devised by gazing into a crystal ball or by reading tea leaves. If they are to be genuinely useful, they must be based on sound factual research and broad experience in city development. In working out a plan, the first step is to make a painstaking survey of all relevant conditions, past and present. Next, these facts are carefully analyzed, and, based on this analysis, predictions of future trends are made. In this way planners find out what the City's needs are today and what they probably will be in the future. The plan must be tailored to fit these requirements. But, at the same time, it must be flexible enough to be adjusted readily to meet changing conditions and unforeseen events.

When a master plan proposal has been completed, the staff presents it to the Commission. The Commissioners review the plan and hold a public hearing at which all interested persons have an opportunity to express their views. Changes may be made at this stage. If the Commission approves the final draft, it forwards it to the City Council with a recommendation that it be officially adopted. The Council considers the proposal in open session, and the public has another chance to be heard. The ultimate fate of the plan rests in the hands of the Council.

Once a plan has received the City Fathers' official approval, the real job has just begun. The recommendations must be transformed from blueprints into new streets, buildings, open spaces and other types of improvements. Construction of these projects is the responsibility of the City's operating departments, the Board of Education, the Utility District, the transit company and many other agencies. In addition, it is essential to have the cooperation of private property owners, both large and small. The diverse activities of all these individuals and groups must be tied together to ensure that new improvements will conform to the Master Plan. More important, officials at all levels of government—and the general public as well—constantly should be reminded that the Plan must progressively be realized if the City is ever to solve its problems. These jobs are the major responsibilities of the Planning Commission.



WHY is the city zoned?

One of the most effective means of turning the Master Plan into action is by regulating the use of property through zoning. Just as inappropriate as keeping pigs in the parlor is the location of an industrial plant in a residential neighborhood. But such mixtures of various conflicting types of land uses are not uncommon in modern cities. To prevent this from happening today, zoning divides the city into districts, each set aside for the most appropriate type of use.

Oakland's Zoning Ordinance divides the City into nine different types of use districts:

The Ordinance makes many logical exceptions to the general rules, such as permitting schools and churches in residential districts and permitting manufacturing in retail districts where it is clearly incidental to the conduct of a retail business. To find out whether a specific use of property is permitted at a particular location, it is only necessary to inquire at the office of the Planning Commission.

Each use district is not self-contained, that is, the City is not simply divided into nine geographic zones by the Ordinance. Rather, each of the nine different types of districts (except the central business district) is distributed in a number of different parts of the City where the permitted uses are appropriate. For instance, each of Oakland's many shopping centers is zoned in the "E" Commercial District. If you want to see how this works, you can consult the map showing the layout of the various districts in the Planning Commission's office, or you can purchase a copy of the Zoning Ordinance at the City Clerk's office for \$1.

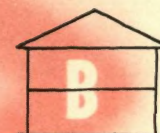
The zoning districts are graded from highest to lowest—from the "A" one-family residential district to the "I" heavy industrial district. Under the Ordinance, a lower class use is not permitted in a higher class district, but a higher class use is permitted in a lower class district. For example, a store would not be allowed in the "D" multiple dwelling zone, but an apartment house would be allowed in the "E" commercial zone.

One of the greatest problems of our cities is overcrowding of the land—overcrowding it both with people and with buildings. Congestion in the city is one of the main reasons why so many families have moved to the suburbs in recent years.

To prevent the crowding of too many people on the land in residential areas, the Zoning Ordinance prescribes minimum lot sizes in the "A" and "B" zones. To prevent excessive lot coverage and excessive building heights, cutting off sunlight and fresh air, the Ordinance prescribes minimum yard spaces around dwellings in the "A", "B", "C" and "D" districts and maximum building heights in all but the "I" heavy industrial district. For information on the standards for lot size, yard spaces and building height on a particular piece of property, consult the Zoning Ordinance or inquire at the office of the Planning Commission.



The "A" District for single-family residences;



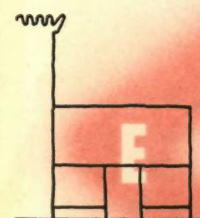
The "B" District for two, three and four-family dwellings;



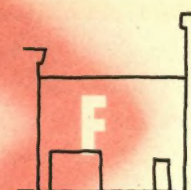
The "C" District for apartment houses as high as six stories;



The "D" District for apartment houses as high as eight stories;



The "E" District for retail business;



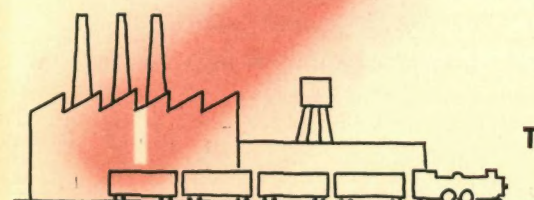
The "F" District for wholesale business and certain types of light manufacturing;



The "G" District—the central business district;



The "H" District for light industries;



The "I" District for heavy industries.

How does the zoning ordinance work?

REZONING



As the City grows and conditions change, modification of the pattern of zoning districts often is in order. This process, called rezoning, may involve a large amount of land or may amount to only a minor adjustment of the boundary line between districts. A rezoning may be proposed by the owners of the property affected or may be initiated by the Planning Commission. An application for a "spot zoning" (rezoning one or a few lots to a classification different from the immediate surrounding area) generally is denied on the ground that such a change would be unfair because it treats similarly situated property owners differently. If you think your property should be rezoned, it is advisable to confer with the planning office regarding the effect of the proposal on the surrounding area. The staff often can make suggestions that will save you time, trouble and expense.



When an owner wants his property rezoned, he or his authorized agent files an application with the City Clerk and deposits \$50 to cover the expense of the proceeding and the necessary staff work. Any unexpended balance is returned to the applicant. An application must be filed at least one week before a Planning Commission meeting (no later than the first or third Wednesday of the month) in order to be scheduled for public hearing at that meeting. Otherwise the application is heard at the following meeting. Notices of the hearing are posted in the vicinity of the property at least five days in advance.

The owner and persons in favor of or opposed to the proposed rezoning may present their views at the hearing. The Commission refers the application to its staff for study. The City Planning Engineer reports his findings to the Commissioners at their next meeting, and, unless there is some reason for postponing action, they vote to recommend granting, denying or modifying the application at that time.

The Commission's recommendation is forwarded to the City Council, which considers it in open meeting. (The Council meets every Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. and every Thursday at 7:30 p.m.) Here again the applicant and the proponents and opponents of the proposed rezoning have an opportunity to be heard. Vote of the Council finally decides the issue.

How does the zoning ordinance work ?

EXTENSION OF NON-CONFORMING USE

Seeing a lone grocery store located in a residential neighborhood, you might think that someone had forgotten to enforce the Zoning Ordinance or a "spot zoning" had been granted by the City Council. Actually, it is more likely that the store was located there before 1935, when the Zoning Ordinance was passed. The law is not retroactive, that is, if property was developed before 1935 for a use that doesn't conform to the present zoning regulations, it cannot be disturbed. Such a use of property is called a "non-conforming use". While an owner is entitled to make use of his property for the same purpose it was used for before the advent of zoning, or for a higher class use, he cannot convert it to a lower class use.

Some cities have ordinances which provide for gradually getting rid of non-conforming uses of property. Oakland controls them only to the extent of prohibiting enlargement or structural alteration without a public hearing and recommendation by the Planning Commission and permission of the City Council. Non-conforming uses are regulated because they are inappropriately located and actually or potentially have a harmful effect on the surrounding properties. Only in exceptional cases will the Council grant permission to enlarge or reconstruct a non-conforming use.

Such permission is called an "extension of a non-conforming use". The procedure for getting an extension is precisely the same as the rezoning procedure, except that the deposit to cover expenses is only \$25. Application is filed with the City Clerk, a public hearing is held by the Commission, and it forwards a recommendation to the Council, which makes the final decision. It is advisable to consult the planning staff before filing an application for extension of a non-conforming use.

EXCEPTION TO USE

There are a few special cases where, although a rezoning would not be justified, an exception to the use regulations of the Zoning Ordinance may be in order. In such an instance the owner may apply for an exception to use of property regulations, stating the use that is proposed and the facts that make the case an exceptional one. Before it can recommend that an exception to use be granted, the Commission must find (1) that there are extraordinary circumstances such that denial of the application would result in undue property loss to the owner, and (2) that the proposed use would not be detrimental to the public interest or harmful to any other property. In granting an exception to use, the Council may impose any conditions it sees fit, including a time limitation. The permit is good only for the specific use applied for.

The procedure for obtaining an exception to use of property regulations is the same as for a rezoning. A \$50 deposit is required.

VARIANCE



To deal with problems arising in the administration of the Zoning Ordinance, there is a Board of Adjustments. The Board is a subcommittee of the Planning Commission, consisting of three members appointed annually by the Chairman of the Commission. The Board meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at 3:30 p.m. in the City Hall.

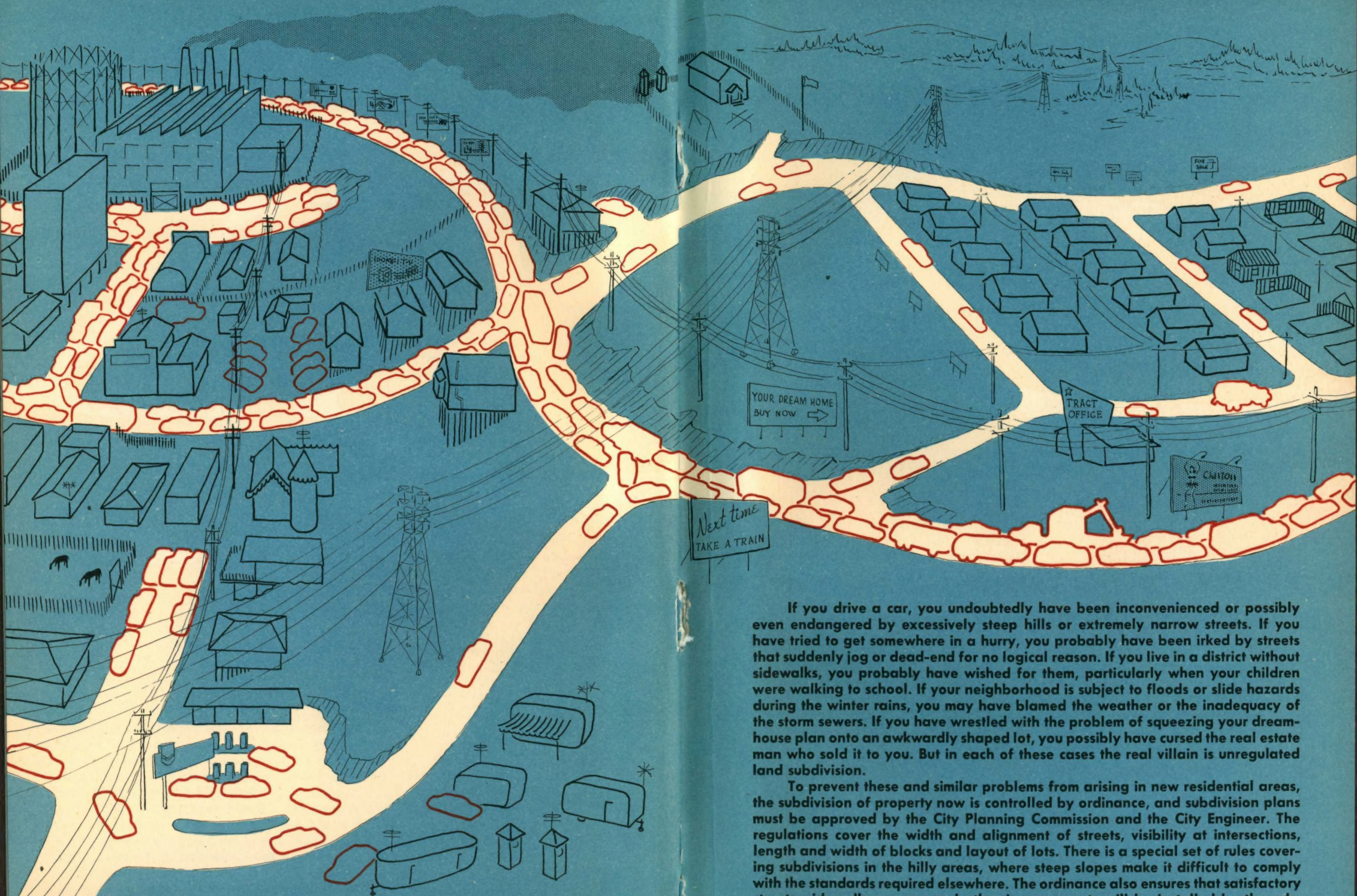
The Board has the power to grant "variances"—exceptions to the general rules—in certain specified types of cases where unreasonable hardship otherwise would result. The kind of hardship the Ordinance refers to is not mere financial hardship but, rather, practical physical difficulties caused by steep slopes, awkward lot shape or the like. In such cases the Board can vary the yard space and height standards of the Ordinance so as to give the owner a fair break and, at the same time, protect the surrounding properties. These cases usually involve only minor adjustments, and the decision of the Board is final.

The Board also can grant another type of variance—permission to locate in certain specified districts various types of uses, such as community centers, schools, libraries, hospitals, doctors' offices, philanthropic institutions, public utility structures, nurseries and parking lots, which do not fit into any particular zoning classification. This power is similar to the authority to rezone property. Consequently a public hearing, posting of notices and study by the staff are required, and the Board's decision is subject to review by the City Council if appealed within 10 days.

A variance can be granted subject to any reasonable conditions the Board sees fit, and violation of such a regulation automatically cancels the permit.

The Board of Adjustments also is responsible for interpreting the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. Most frequently, interpretation is needed where the line between two zoning districts runs through a piece of property.

Applications for yard and height variances and interpretations of the Zoning Ordinance can be filed at the office of the Planning Commission. If they are received by the Friday preceding the second or fourth Wednesday of the month, they will be decided by the Board at its next meeting. Otherwise they will be held over until the following meeting.



WHY

do we regulate subdivision?

If you drive a car, you undoubtedly have been inconvenienced or possibly even endangered by excessively steep hills or extremely narrow streets. If you have tried to get somewhere in a hurry, you probably have been irked by streets that suddenly jog or dead-end for no logical reason. If you live in a district without sidewalks, you probably have wished for them, particularly when your children were walking to school. If your neighborhood is subject to floods or slide hazards during the winter rains, you may have blamed the weather or the inadequacy of the storm sewers. If you have wrestled with the problem of squeezing your dream-house plan onto an awkwardly shaped lot, you possibly have cursed the real estate man who sold it to you. But in each of these cases the real villain is unregulated land subdivision.

To prevent these and similar problems from arising in new residential areas, the subdivision of property now is controlled by ordinance, and subdivision plans must be approved by the City Planning Commission and the City Engineer. The regulations cover the width and alignment of streets, visibility at intersections, length and width of blocks and layout of lots. There is a special set of rules covering subdivisions in the hilly areas, where steep slopes make it difficult to comply with the standards required elsewhere. The ordinance also ensures that satisfactory streets, sidewalks, sewers and other improvements will be installed by the subdivider at his own expense. No subdivision can be finally approved until the improvements have been completed or a bond has been filed with the City guaranteeing that the work will be done. Copies of the subdivision regulations are available, free of charge, at the office of the Planning Commission.



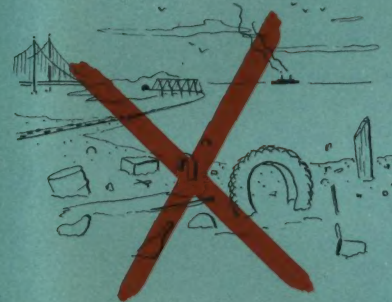
What is your interest in **CITY PLANNING**?



Oakland is where you live and work, where you shop and seek entertainment, where you own property, where your children play and go to school. Chances are that when they grow up, they too will live in Oakland. Haven't you a real interest, a personal stake in improving the City?



The objective of the Master Plan is to make Oakland a better place to live in. The closer we come to this goal, the more convenient and pleasant your life can be. You probably are equally interested in the well-being of your friends and neighbors and, perhaps in a more general way, in the welfare of the community at large. If so, you are in agreement with the fundamental aim of the Planning Commission that everyone



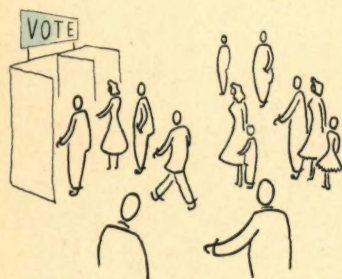
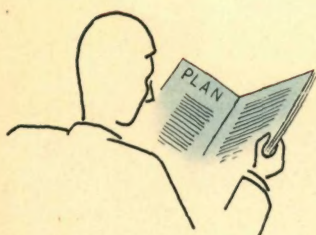
in Oakland should have a good place to live and work and play.

Oakland being your home, you undoubtedly feel a certain amount of civic pride when you show visitors Lake Merritt, our fine residential districts, and the magnificent views from Skyline Boulevard. Your reaction probably is quite different when you get stuck in congested traffic on one of our busy thoroughfares, see the sludge banks along the shoreline at low tide, or travel through an overcrowded, rundown neighborhood. As a matter of local pride, don't you think we should try to solve these problems?

Planning can safeguard your pocketbook. Strict enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance will protect your property from deterioration. Inharmonious land uses will be kept out of your neighborhood, and it will not be allowed to become overcrowded. New schools, parks and playgrounds and conveniently located shopping centers tend to increase the price of nearby residential land. Improved streets, better public transportation and more parking spaces bolster the value of the commercial and industrial properties they serve. Thus a master plan, soundly conceived and carried out, can help to stabilize and to enhance real estate values—the principal financial base of the city.

YOU have a vital stake in planning!

Your support is needed!



Under democratic government there can be no planning unless the people want it. No plans can be turned into action without public understanding and support. That is why we ask you to become interested in the activities of your Planning Commission and to back its campaign to make Oakland a better city.

Specifically, we invite you to attend the Commission's meetings and to express your views on community problems. We suggest that you read the Master Plan reports and pass your comments along to the Commissioners or the staff. We hope that you will discuss the plans with your friends and neighbors and with members of the organizations you belong to.

If you decide that the plans are worthy of support and that action is needed, why not get your organization to take the lead?

We are planning for the future of your city.

We need your help

